

Statement of Michael M. Kaiser
President, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts
Before the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's
Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings
and Emergency Management
June 15, 2007

Good morning, my name is Michael Kaiser and I have the honor of serving as the President of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. I have served in this capacity for the last six and a half years and it is my pleasure to appear before your panel today.

The Kennedy Center is both our national cultural center and a living memorial to President John F. Kennedy. I emphasize the word "living" since there is a vitality to the memorial and the institution that far exceeds anything that could have been envisioned when the Center was chartered by Congress in 1958 under President Dwight D. Eisenhower as the national cultural center.

The Kennedy Center is unique in that it serves the dual purpose of being the national cultural center *and* the Presidential memorial to John F. Kennedy. For the benefit of the members of this subcommittee, I will give a brief description of what the Center does and how it does it.

Each year, the Kennedy Center reaches over one million people with more than 2,000 performances in all performing arts disciplines. Every season, our focus is on developing programming that achieves national and international acclaim as is befitting our role as the national cultural center. But our performing arts activities are not limited to the Washington D.C. area. We are committed to touring productions to all 50 states to make them available to all Americans.

The National Symphony Orchestra, a vital part of the Kennedy Center for 20 years, is fulfilling this mandate by expanding its national touring activities. Our Imagination Celebration on Tour program brings the best of family and children's theater to 107 cities in 31 states and serves over a quarter million people.

The Center is committed to making arts accessible to everyone and presents free performances every day of the year on its Millennium Stage. These performances are available free to every American via live Internet broadcasts.

The Kennedy Center is also committed to arts education and has created one of the most extensive arts education programs in the world spending \$125 million over five years on this effort and serving 11 million people nationwide. We now train 25,000 teachers annually to bring the arts into the classroom at all levels. Our distance learning initiative, which touches more than one million teachers and students, enables classrooms to experience world-class performances and to engage in discussions with artists at the

Kennedy Center. Our Partners in Education Program mentors relationships between arts organizations and their community school systems with 105 organization teams in school systems in 46 states, including the District of Columbia.

The Kennedy Center also provides training to talented young Americans who aspire to careers in dance, music, conducting and set design. Our American College Theater Festival identifies the next generation of actors, designers and playwrights with 20,000 students from 900 colleges participating. The Kennedy Center has instituted two programs which we hope will change the landscape of the arts in America: The Institute for Arts Management, which prepares arts managers for jobs running major institutions throughout the world, and the Capacity Building Program for Culturally Specific Arts Organizations, which trains managers of African-American, Latino, Asian-American and Native American arts organizations. We have also instituted international arts management programs in Mexico, China, Pakistan and the 22 Arab nations.

All of this programming is supported by a mix of government, private and earned income. As a presidential memorial, the Center receives an annual federal appropriation of approximately \$35 million. I should point out that the direct federal funding provided to the Kennedy Center is used only for the operation, maintenance, and capital repair of the presidential monument. Indeed, our originating statute prohibits the use of these federal funds for any programming expenses.

The extensive programming and education activities that the Center presents and provides are supported through private contributions of almost \$50 million annually, not counting other government grants or endowment earnings, which total an additional \$20 million each year. In addition, the Center earns approximately \$65 million each year from ticket sales, parking fees, food service, space rental and our gift shops.

In sum, government funding represents one quarter of our total annual operating budget. We are deeply grateful for this support.

My experience at the Kennedy Center mirrors my experiences at the other arts organizations I have managed both in the United States and abroad. At the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, American Ballet Theatre and the Royal Opera House, a substantial portion of the budget was covered by private contributions. The majority of this funding came from individual donors, with substantial additional support from corporations and foundations. In every case, strong artistic and educational programming was the key to private fund-raising; an aggressive marketing campaign and a strong Board of Directors were also prerequisites. Fortunately, I am blessed with each of these assets at the Kennedy Center.

I thank the subcommittee for its continued support of the Kennedy Center and I am pleased to answer any questions that members of the subcommittee may have. Thank you very much.